Committee on Resources

Witness Testimony

Testimony on H.Con. Res 151
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Commissioner
Coos County, Oregon
House of Representatives
Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health
September 18, 1997

The amount of C02 used in photosynthesis per acre of forest land; the amount of oxygen released into the atmosphere; the amount of carbon stored in the forest is in direct proportion to the amount of wood fiber produced.

This is high school biology. I am not an expert witness. This information does not require an expert witness. This knowledge is part of the public domain.

I would like to bring two aspects of forest management to your attention that aide in reducing greenhouse gasses on the globe, both of which compliment each other in addition to having many other societal benefits.

First: Maximizing Forest Growth.

For every soil classification and for each climatic condition there is a growth potential depending on stalking and non-utilizable competition.

I happen to live in the most productive area of North America, the Pacific Northwest or more specifically, the Douglas Fir region. The federally managed portion of this area amounts to just under 25 million acres of which approximately « is in mature status. According to Roger A. Sedjo in "Forests, a Tool to Moderate Global Warming", approximately one-half of the C02 emissions on earth annually are taken up in natural processes present today. OF the 5.8 billion tons of carbon thus emitted, 2.9 billion need to be dealt with if the atmosphere were to remain carbon natural. If the 12.5 million acres of federally managed Douglas Fir forests in the Northwest that are presently mature, could over the next 50 years be harvested and converted to growing forest averaging sequestration of 2 tons of carbon per acre per year, the Northwest's contribution on these lands alone would be 2 5 million tons of carbon or about.8% of the needed additional carbon fixation on earth. This would constitute a major commitment on the part of the United States to the Global Community and would have societal benefits including jobs, revenue to local governments and affordable housing nationwide.

On the converse side, if those timber lands are not actively so managed, the contribution of carbon to the global community could be equally as great when history repeats itself. Every acre of Douglas Fir timber prior to planned harvest was a result of a natural regeneration event, mostly fire. If ever we needed to heed the lessons of history, it is now. If we do not harvest, nature will and without any of the societal benefits and at a great threat to public safety.

The second aspect of forest management I wish to give a few minutes to is fire. Wildfire has been touted in recent years as the forester panacea, the answer to all our forest health problems; but fire of catastrophic proportions is the most rapid form of oxidation in the forest. Beyond that point, the timber that is dead continues to rot, a slower form of oxidation. Finally, when the oxidation is complete, the tree has turned to soil and the carbon has united with oxygen and is in the atmosphere. When a forest reaches the point where there is no net increase in wood fiber (when it is oxidizing as rapidly as it is growing there is then no net benefit to the atmosphere). In maximizing wood fiber production we not only maximize the benefit to our atmosphere but we also produce societal benefits such as homes, jobs and government services. Further, in Western Oregon our managed forests are also producing better aquatic resources. Coos County annually harvests more timber than any county on the Pacific Coast and it has more Coho Salmon than any county on the Pacific Coast. In fact, it has more Coho than all the rest of the Oregon counties put together.

When my forebears came to Western Oregon in the early 1850's they found even aged stands of Douglas Fir in varying ages of growth depending on how long it had been since the last fire. What is now the Siuslaw National Forest was ashes. They saw the fire of 1868 jump the South Fork of Coos River and burn over 1/3 of Coos County. This was a function of nature, a recycling of carbon but at a time before we began using fossil fuels. Today, when the average American uses 7 gallons of petroleum per day to transport themselves, their supplies and services, there is no dispute but that there is adequate carbon in the atmosphere for our crops and forests to meet their maximum growth potential. The forest effected by the N.W. Forest Plan have the potential of growing 5 billion board feet of timber per year.

If we only harvest 10% of that potential as under the Northwest Forest Plan, eventually the forests will only be growing at that rate. However, speaking historically, we can say with assured certainty, if we do not harvest at a rate closely approaching growth potential, nature will, through catastrophic fire.

In the Northwest, as we see our mills and logging operations shutting down, as we see timber being imported, further tilting our balance of trade; as we witness the loss of jobs, loss of county revenue for public health and safety we are also witnessing the loss of the largest fire department ever assembled in the history of the world. the loggers and their bulldozers and lowboys and water wagons and fire fighting equipment and manpower and just plain know how. As fuel buildup continues, our ability to deal with it decreases.

Because Coos County is in the general proximity of the best tree growing area in North America, and because we maximize that growth by optimizing our harvest cycle, it is encouraging to know that Coos County has done more to enhance the atmosphere in the past century than probably any other county of its size in America.

We, from Coos County, Oregon, would like to challenge the rest of America, through legislative commitment to do as well.

Thank you.

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